Note from LMB: This interview was done in June of 2006 by John Joseph Adams for an article for Sci Fi Wire, the then-Sci Fi Channel website, upon the nomination of *The Hallowed Hunt* for a Mythopoeic Award for best adult book of 2006. (It did not win, but, yes, it *was* an honor to be nominated; in 2002, its companion volume *The Curse of Chalion* did win, and *Paladin of Souls* was also nominated by the Mythopoeic Society in 2004.)

Questions by John Joseph Adams, Answers by Lois McMaster Bujold.

(1) How did you hear that you'd been nominated? What was your reaction?

I was notified, as has become usual for such things, by email; my reaction was something like, "Oh! Cool!"

(2) How do you feel about the Mythopoeic Award, and other awards in general? Is one of them more important (in your eyes) than any of the others? Where does the Mythopoeic Award rank?

Awards in general are a lot more fun to win than lose–I've done plenty of both. There is an effect of diminishing returns after a while. One's early awards tend to make a bigger difference to one's new-minted career than later ones. But it really does have to be remembered that literary awards are not won in any objective fashion, like a race; they are bestowed, like a gift.

If awards have a utility, it is in their use as advertising, I suppose; so the most useful awards to win are those that are widely recognized by one's target audience. There are a lot of awards out there, targeted to a lot of different audiences. In my neck of the genre woods, science fiction and fantasy, I suppose the Hugo and Nebula awards are the most widely recognized. Coming from a mainly SF-nal background, I admit the first time I'd ever heard of the Mythopoeic awards was when I was informed that *The Curse of Chalion* had won one, but some of my fantasy-writer friends were quite aware of it and happy to bring me up to speed.

Ultimately, awards are defined by the books that have won them. I found on looking up the lists of past winners that I had come into some very interesting company indeed.

(3) What do you think of your competition on the shortlist? Have you read any of the other novels? Which do you think has the best shot (or is most deserving) of winning?

Alas, I am perpetually behind in my genre reading, and I have not yet read any of the other books on this year's list. So I haven't a guess, here.

(4) Please describe *The Hallowed Hunt*—just enough to give readers a taste of the novel.

You want, like, two sentences, don't you. Sigh.

The Hallowed Hunt opens when Ingrey kin Wolfcliff, retainer to the Sealmaster (chancellor) of the Weald, is sent to arrest a young woman, Ijada dy Castos, who has just killed in self-defense a mad scion of the royal house, Prince Boleso. Ingrey discovers the prince was engaged in illegal animal magic, and Ijada has become accidentally imbued with the spirit of a sacrificed leopard, possibly as a partial result of interference by a god known as the Son of Autumn, one of the five real and active gods of this alternate world. Ingrey himself, as a result of a mysterious family contretemps of eleven years ago that resulted in the death of his own father, bears the spirit of a wolf.

T/o/g/e/t/h/e/r, t/h/e/y f/i/g/h/t/ c/r/i/m/e... no, wait.

Returning to the capital, they find the apparent political complications of their dilemma are as nothing compared to the theological ones. At Boleso's funeral, Ingrey and Ijada have a visionary encounter with the Son of Autumn hinting at further use of Ingrey's growing powers on the god's behalf, involving the Wounded Woods, the haunted site of a former military massacre and Ijada's dowry lands; as the plot unravels, their tasks as the gods' chosen tools gradually grow clearer, but not easier, as ancient and modern tragedies intertwine.

Then please talk about the genesis of the book, how you came to write it, where the idea came from, etc. (5) Was there anything about the writing of the novel that was unusual or noteworthy? Was it personal to you, or did you have to do a lot of research, anything like that? If so, please discuss.

Squishing these together: I suppose the book started with two chance encounters. The first, some years back, was meeting Dr. Tom Shippey in an airport lounge on the way home from an academic conference on the fantastic in the arts in Florida. Our paths had not crossed there, as we were running on separate tracks. I was unfamiliar with his work at the time, so we ended up talking about academics devoted to medieval subjects generally, and I told him about my great uncle Gordon Hall Gerould who had been a professor of early English at Princeton during the first half of the twentieth century. But later, remembering the conversation, I picked up Shippey's book *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century* in a convention book dealer's room, and read it with great interest, especially the parts about how the history of words unfold from them, Tolkien's interest in what is sometimes called "that great Northern thing," and some of his original sources, which I also went on to read–*Beowulf* of course, *Kalevala*, and *The Nibelungenleid*,

mainly. (I read the latter in one day while stuck in LAX waiting through a five hour layover for a plane to New Zealand that was 6 hours late. The international terminal at LAX is horribly under-lit for readers, I note in passing.)

The second chance was in November of 2002, when I happened to be between writing books. I stumbled over, literally, a book on the floor of a friend's house where it had fallen from her to-be-read pile, with the irresistible title of *Mad Princes of Renaissance Germany*, by an academic historian named Midelfort. Wonderful, lurid, sometimes horrifying and heartbreaking stuff, there, in that slim vol. But it got me to thinking how under-utilized German medieval sources are in modern fantasy genre writing, as the Spanish sources also were, which was part of why that region snared me for the first two Chalion books. One of the histories caught in my mind, and I couldn't help thinking about how I would have wanted it to come out instead of the tragedy it was. This tale was the seed of the opening plot situation of *The Hallowed Hunt*, where a young woman has just murdered a mad prince who tried to ravish her. (In the real world, it was the other way around; the girl was slain by the mad prince. It took four days for his handlers to nerve up to get the body away from him and arrest him...)

I then started looking into early German history, only to discover that very little was known of or readily available about the pagan Saxons, conquered and forcibly converted to Christianity in a generations-long war by, mainly, Charlemagne. That war included a major, and at the time infamous, military massacre that also caught my imagination, Viet Nam war-era child that I was.

Meanwhile, in December of 2002, my agent had run an offer from another publisher past me for a romantic fantasy. The ideas I was incubating didn't fit in that space, but the offer did trigger their coming-together in an idea for a new book set in the Chalion five-gods-world equivalent of medieval Germany, exploring the consequences of historical tragedies spinning down through time. It all comes together. Trust me...

(6) What is it about the novel that you think the award voters responded to? That is, what is it that made your novel stand out amongst the rest of the field, that made it worthy of singling out as one of the best of the year?

Reader-response is a slippery and idiosyncratic thing; this is a question you really need to ask the readers. Individually. But the Chalion books take religion seriously, both as a social institution and in the exploration of the emotions of mysticism, so seem naturally of interest to an array of readers looking for a book that exemplifies "the spirit of the Inklings", a group of men who also took their religion seriously.

(7) Who are your authorial inspirations? Were there any inspirations for this novel in particular?

Passing on this one, tho' the second part is covered above.

(8) Anything else you'd like to add? (Feel free to plug any new or forthcoming work here.)

Upcoming in October of this year from Eos/HarperCollins will be *The Sharing Knife, vol. 1: Beguilement*, my first fantasy duology. (The second half, *Legacy*, will appear in 2007.) It's set in a very different world from the Chalion books, and written in a very different voice than the usual faux-European medievaloid. I also needed a break from gods. I have a short description up on my website, here:

http://www.dendarii.com/news/06Jan.html

Even more exciting is the cover art by Julie Bell, some of the most beautiful and accurate I've ever had; a sneak peek is here, which you can link:

http://www.dendarii.co.uk/Covers/American/knife.html